TASK FORCE RUSSIA -- BIWEEKLY REPORT 15-28 AUGUST 1992 4TH REPORT

TASK FORCE RUSSIA (POW/MIA)

REPORT TO THE U.S. DELEGATION, U.S.-RUSSIAN JOINT COMMISSION ON POW/MIAs

28 AUGUST 1992

Handling Instructions

This report has been prepared for the use of the Commission in pursuit of our mission. While it is an unclassified document in accordance with Department of Defense classification guidelines for POW/MIA information, it nonetheless contains casualty-related information and should not be disseminated outside of Commission channels pending efforts by the Department of Defense Executive Agent to locate and notify as many next of kin as feasible.

DAPE-ZB-TFR

MEMORANDUM FOR USDEL, USRJC(POW/MIA)

FROM: MG Loeffke

SUBJECT: Bi-Weekly Report, 15-28 August 1992

1. FORMAT: After consultation with the Executive Secretary, the Task Force will publish future bi-weekly reports in a more abbreviated format, as exemplified in this report.

2. GENERAL: Our analytical team in Washington is developing a research strategy to exploit and maximize the interview and archival research effort in Moscow. In this regard, we are developing case files for each serviceman's name that is identified to us whenever appropriate. We have examined our case load to date and are establishing priorities as well as an assessment of the chances of resolving each case.

We are making progress in the manning of the Task Force and the procurement of the facilities and equipment required to permit us to accomplish the mission. Due to difficulties in obtaining several key personnel from the active force, we are turning to the reserve force structure to fill these spaces. Task Force strength now stands at 26, including six in the Moscow Office. Colonel Ed Pusey, Chief, Moscow Office, arrived in Moscow on 3 September 1992.

3. PRIORITIES: We have worked closely with DoD and the Executive Secretary to identify operational priorities for the Task Force that best support the work of the Commission as we approach the September Commission meeting in Moscow. The resultant list is included in the attached report. We are focusing on accomplishing the Top Five of the list during the coming reporting period.

4. NEW TASK FORCE FACILITIES: Effective immediately, the Task Force Director's office is located in the Pentagon, Room 2D677, telephone (703) 693-9431. Deputy Director, Col Herrington, can be found in 2D655, telephone (703) 693-9434. Operations Officer,-Col Jerry Parr, and the Task Force's operational elements are located in the Hoffman I Building, Rooms 434 and 444, telephone numbers (703) 325-1755 or 325-0864.

BIWEEXLY REPORT ON SIGNIFICANT ACTIVITIES

28 August 1992 TASK FORCE RUSSIA (POW/MIA)

1. SUMMARY: During the reporting period, the Task Force made significant operational and organizational progress. Operationally, there is an emerging picture that U.S. POW's from the Korean

War were transported to the Soviet Union for interrogation. Additionally, we have identified the general (but not specific) location of a reported gravesite for U.S. POW's held by the Japanese during WWII. The Moscow Office has aggressively pursued previous leads and interviewed new sources, while the Washington Office concentrates on analyzing the backlog of information received to date. No concrete progress has been made on the question of Vietnam-era POW's. Organizationally, both the Washington and Moscow office received additional personnel, enhancing our growing operational capability. The Washington Office occupied offices in the Hoffman I building. While we are not 100% operationally capable, work progresses toward obtaining the required communications, automation and personnel.

2. UPDATE ON ISSUES FROM PREVIOUS REPORTS: Although the Russian side apparently regards the "Marken" case as closed, TFR analysts continue to explore all possible leads. In this connection, we will interview the journalist, Melnikov, on 2 SEPT 92. USDAO, Moscow, has assumed jurisdiction over the "Nguyen Mi" matter. Within resource constraints, we continue to research the lists of names provided to us in our efforts to determine whether any name represents a still-unaccounted for service member. Russian requests for information from the U.S. side are being handled as expeditiously as possible, with the goal of addressing all outstanding questions by the September Commission meeting.

3. SIGNIFICANT INTERVIEWS CONDUCTED: During the reporting period, the Moscow Office conducted the most significant interview to date. Col. (Ret.) G.I. Korotkov, currently employed by the Ministry of Defense of the Russian Federation, provided a wealth of information and leads.

SYNOPSIS: Korotkov stated the following:

--U.S. POW's from the Korean War were transferred to the Soviet Union, where they were imprisoned and interrogated.

--He personally interrogated two U.S. POW's, although he could not recall their names.

--He recalled the name "1TC Black" from among the POW's.

--Khabarovsk was a transit and interrogation point for the POW's.

--The POW's were under the control of the N~JD, although GRU interrogators had professional access to them at Khabarovsk.

--He believed the number of POW's processed through Khabarovsk was in the hundreds.

--He identified the channels through which interrogation reports were forwarded.

--The Soviets attempted to "turn" U.S. prisoners, but were relatively unsuccessful in comparison to their experience with German POW's from WWII.

--He asserted that the declassification process under the General Staff, which had targeted documents relative to the Commission's charter, has essentially ceased functioning since LTG Lobov's dismissal.

--He asserted that pertinent collected records are being held in the General Staff headquarters and that the current military leadership views their declassification as a low priority.

--He identified five archives as critical to the Commission's efforts: (1) the External Policy Archives of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, (2) the Central Archives of the Ministry of Defense at Podol'sk, (3) the Archives of the Main Political Directorate of the Ministry of Defense, which are held separately, (4) the Archives of the KGB, and (5) the Archives of the Politburo/Central Committee.

--He implied that some records dealing with U.S. POW's of the Korean War period may have been intentionally destroyed.

--He also identified potentially-lucrative lower level and out-of-channels archives.

--He identified individuals who might be useful to TFR's future efforts.

--He provided additional experiential and second-hand details on the handling of U.S. POW's.

ASSESSMENT: Interviewers assessed Korotkov as highly credible.

His testimony is important not only for the valuable details highlighted above, but because he directly contradicts previous Russian assertions, both direct and oblique, that no U.S. POW's from the Korean War were ever transported to or held on Soviet soil. Historical sources available to the Washington office circumstantially corroborate Korotkov's specific claim that U.S. POW's were held in the vicinity of Khabarovsk. Further, an interview conducted by the Washington Office with an emigre source also surfaced the claim that "Americans" were held in a camp between Khabarovsk and the Komsomolsk region; however this source could provide no eyewitness details.

An analysis of geography and the lines of communication contemporary to the Korean War also supports the thesis that some U.S. Korean War POW's were held by the Soviets in the vicinity of Khabarovsk for an unspecified length of time. No account has surfaced of a repatriated U.S. POW who believed he had been held on Russian soil. Our working assumption, until disproved, will be that U.S. Korean War POW's were held in the Soviet Far East and that the issue of their fates requires resolution.

PLANNED ACTION: TFR will pursue all leads raised by Korotkov. Working in cooperation with our Russian counterparts, we have already begun seeking interviews with named sources and will request that the Russian side expedite the search for and declassification of pertinent documents. TFR is presently developing a strategy for dealing with the specific issue of POW's held in the vicinity of Khabarovsk.

FILE CITE: MSG 241259Z AUG 92, FM AMEMBASSY MOSCOW

4. SIGNIFICANT LETTERS/PHONE CONTACTS: During the reporting period, the Moscow Office forwarded a total of twenty letters to the Washington Office for detailed analysis. The review and translation process is ongoing as of this report's closure; however, a preliminary assessment reflects that the letters fall into the following categories: (1) those of immediate, genuine value; (2) letters from correspondents with consular-related, nonmilitary problems or information, and (3) miscellaneous letters of limited value to the Commission's work. Three letters warrant special mention. A letter from a source who would otherwise be regarded as non-credible contained specific details of a possible American held within the state security psychiatric hospital/camp system. The source had been prosecuted and confined on criminal charges, during which time he was "treated" in a mental hospital administered by the security apparatus. He claims to have knowledge of a possible American who had somehow made his way to Moscow from the hinterlands in order to reach the U.S. Embassy. According to source, the alleged

American, called "The Unknown One" by the hospital staff, was beaten and drugged when he tried to communicate his wish to contact the U.S. consul. The Moscow Office is pursuing this lead. The other two letters came from a pensioner in Sevastopol and raised a set of issues detailed below:

SYNOPSIS: G.S. Volkov, an 84-year-old resident of Sevastopol, wrote an initial letter to the commission claiming that a grave site(s) containing U.S. POW's held by the Japanese could be found on the Southern Kuril island of Iturup. According to the source, U.S. POW's were used as slave labor by the Japanese to build a military airfield at an isolated site. The POW's lived in inhuman conditions in caves above Sopochnaya Bay, and an unspecified number of them died. Although source could cite only the approximate location of the grave, he was certain it could be located. Responding to a communication from the Moscow Office, he wrote a second letter which added little usable information but took a political stance, asking that the issue receive maximum international publicity and that a search be organized as quickly as possible, since the Kuril Islands might be returned to Japanese control. The second letter also contained biographical data that merits further analysis.

ASSESSMENT: The likelihood is very high that U.S. WWII POW's are buried on Iturup.

PLANNED ACTION: American Embassy Kiev, through Dept. of State, has been requested to provide assistance in follow-on contact with Volkov. When probable grave sites can be more definitively located, we will be in a position to request that the Russian side facilitate access to the sites in an effort to recover and identify remains. Timing of this planned action should be carefully coordinate with the Dept. of State, in view of the high visibility of the Kuril Island issue in Russo-Japanese relations.

MSG CITE: Letters 7 and 17, Moscow Office origin.

5. SIGNIFICANT ARCHIVES OR OTHER DOCUMENTS OBTAINED: During the reporting period, the Moscow Office passed 61 pages of materials to the Washington Office. All concern the Cold War and are cataloged as "Batch 13." 57 pages refer to individuals whose names were provided to the U.S. side as batches 7 and 8. As discussed in report #3, none of these persons are unaccounted-for U.S. service members. TFR 13-20 is significant because it provides clues that may lead to further information -- specifically, within the "First Special Department of the MVD," the Pechora, Peschani and Stepni labor camps of the MVD, and the corrective labor camp of Omsk Oblast run by the local MVD. These documents were received late in the reporting period. Translation and analysis continues.

6. SIGNIFICANT CONUS ACTIVITIES: The logistical effort involved in receiving new personnel and establishing the Hoffman I offices consumed a substantial amount of the time and energies of the Washington Office. The effort to build communications and automation systems continues, and the attainment of a full operating capability may require approximately one additional month (longer, if hardware deliveries are delayed). The Washington Office began the process of evolving a research strategy in an effort to build models of how U.S. POW's might have been transported and interned. This effort will continue to expand as additional information becomes available. We pursued informal agreements with various archival offices critical to our records searches and sought to better identify gaps in U.S. archival holdings. A representative from TFR spoke to a citizen's organization in New Hampshire that has made the search for unaccounted for POW/MIA's its cause. Our assessment is that TFR's participation in this event reflected positively on the U.S. Government's efforts to account for all of its service members from past wars. The Washington office also scheduled an interview with a political refugee who claimed to hold information on U.S. POW's in the former Soviet Union; searched for archival photography of WWII era Japanese airfields on Iturup; continued to translate source documents and letters; and coordinated the Volkov issue (para. 4 above) with the Dept. of State and the Moscow Office.

7. OPERATIONAL PRIORITIES: In coordination with the Executive Secretary, the Task Force is addressing ten operational priorities, which have been communicated to the Moscow Office. These are reflected in the memorandum appended to this report.

8. CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS:

A. We note the beneficial interaction between archival research and the interview/correspondence process. We should continue and expand the current search methodology that stresses both archival research and human contacts. In many cases, only human sources can provide the necessary leads to locate crucial documents in the vast Russian and former Soviet archives. Further, interviews and letters provide a healthy check on formal assertions.

B. We clearly need to effect more active and wide-ranging field work and more detailed analysis and collection planning. We will endeavor to identify highly qualified personnel in the reserve structure to make up shortfalls in personnel still being experienced from the active forces.

C. Further, with regard to thoroughness and the need for more personnel, we are seeking mutually-beneficial cooperation with all government agencies or government-affiliated sources concerned with the POW/MIA issue. The good offices of Commission members are enjoined to insure that all information, reports and letters are forwarded expeditiously to the Task Force's Washington Office.

D. We need to stress the construction of analytical models that allow a systemic approach to the issue of POW/MIA's in Russia as a complement to the current, extremely time-consuming approach of concentrating principally on individual names. We believe the Commission should always take multiple, mutually-supportive approaches to solving problems with our Russian counterparts to accelerate the accomplishment of the mission and avoid becoming sidetracked. Every individual is important; but the surest way to broaden our success, especially for the Korean War and World War II era service members, is to adhere closely and consistently to a research strategy and method which will "solve" the Russian system.

Attachments: MEMORANDUM FOR DIRECTOR, TASK FORCE RUSSIA; SUBJECT: Task Force Russia (TFR) Operational Priorities, 01 SEP 92.

OFFICE OF THE ASSISTANT SECRETARY OF DEFENSE WASHINGTON, D. C. 20301-2400
International Security Affairs

MEMORANDUM FOR DIRECTOR, TASK FORCE RUSSIA 01 SEP 1992

SUBJECT: Task Force Russia (TFR) Operational Priorities

Per our discussion of August 2S, 1992, the following is a list of operational priorities which U.S. delegation of the Joint Commission believes merit the immediate attention of the Task Force. They are also issues which will be the focus of our discussions with the Russians during the next Joint Commission meeting scheduled for the week of September 21 1992 in Moscow. Request you submit these items to Task Force Russia's Moscow Office with instructions that it contact Russian counterparts and proceed with follow-up action prior to the Commission's next meeting.

1. The need to meet with and interview the former Soviet Ambassador to in Laos in 1973 is of critical importance in the quest for information about missing service personnel in Southeast Asia. Every effort must be made to enlist the Russians support to assure that an interview with the ambassador can be arranged and that his cooperation can be expected.

2. Russian Geologist V.I. Dmitriyev. Dmitriyev alleges to have been in Vietnam in March 1987, "a Group Of Captured Americans Being Transported by Vietnamese Guards (Typewritten letter to Ambassador Strauss dtd 28 April 1992). Request TFR Moscow in coordination with DCM Collins seek Russian cooperation to obtain written assurances sought by Mr Dmitriyev so that he can provide, without concern for any negativc consequences the additional information that wishes to share with us about his alleged sightings of U.S. nationals.

3. General Anatolii Har'koff. Deputy Chief of the Institute of the Military History claims to have conducted research on American POW/MIA issues and wants to share his findings with the Commission information about General Har'koff has been provided to TFR by USAF CAPT Eric Edgar who recently returned from a trip to Russia. Request TFR Moscow contact General Har'koff and determine the value of his research as it applies to the Joint Commission's mandate.

4. Interrogation report information from Vietnam and Korean Conflicts: Information provided by the Russian side includes two lists of Korean War POW's (510 and 71) reference to interrogation of 59 Korean POW's and questionnaires provided to the North Vietnamese by the Russians to use during the interrogation of U.S. POW's (TFR msg dtg 222051ZJUL92 and interview with General Abramov, May 1992). The Korean War lists contain names which appear on the UNMAC "389" list and require immediate follow-up. In addition, the questionnaires mentioned by Abramov are of great interest to the US side. Request TFR Moscow continue to press the Russians for more details about this interrogation-related information.

5. Soviet World War II General V.S. Volkov is reported to have information about U.S. POW's alleged to have been used by the Japanese to build an airstrip on the Island of Iturup in the Southern Kuriles (Hand-written letter by Volkov to Joint Commission dated 9 July 1992). Request TFR Moscow through

American Embassy Moscow coordinate with American Embassy, Kiyev, in effort to contact Volkov and interview him for additional information. Questions have already been prepared by TFR in Washington and forwarded to Kiyev.

6. The "David Markin" Case should be pursued to closure with the steps set forth in the most recent cable traffic as a suitable course of action (Moscow 025862). Emphasis should be placed with Russian counterparts on the importance of the American case as a litmus test of effective bilateral effort reflecting the shared goals of both nations. The Russian side should be urged to redouble its efforts to locate medical and administrative personnel from PL 350/5 identified in previous reporting as critical to resolving the Markin mystery.

7. Acess should be sought to the MVD's comprehensive file of fingerprint cards on GULAG inmates maintained since World War II. Names submitted should include Vance Eugene BLACK (cited in Moscow 025231) as well as the names of the 59 US POW's interrogated by the Soviets during the Korean War. Russian counterparts should be urged to provide those names.

8. Priority should be given to encouraging the Russian side to follow through on previous assurances of success to KGB/GRU personnel with knowledge of U.S. POW/MIAs. While initial interviews were conducted during the Commission's first weeks of operation, we urgently need follow-up with additional interviews to assure that this important source of information is not overlooked.

9. Colonel Gavril Korotkov claims to have knowledge of Soviet interrogations of U.S. POW's during the Korean War (Moscow 025231). Request TFR Moscow contact Lt Col Osipov and request that he urge General Volkogonov to assure that the process of declassifying military documents begun under General Lobov be reinstated. Follow up expeditiously on all leads developed during Korotkov's debriefings.

10. Soviet NKVD Camps for English-speaking People (Moscow 024353): Obtain and examine the records of Camp 27 (Krasnodar); Camp 64 (Tambov), Camp 4B in Ivanov and any other corollary facilities. The above priorities should be the primary focus of Task Force Russia's work in the immediate future. Of the ten items listed, the fist four are in the category of politically significant and very likely to appear as agenda topics at the Joint Commission's September meeting. The remaining six items are in our judgment issues which are promising, timely, and likely to advance our knowledge on specific issues. They too may well be discussed at the Commission's meeting next month. Work on these issues, however, should not inhibit the Task Force's continuing efforts to analyze documents and information received from the Russians or to correlate names, incident locations, and the possible location of U.S. service personnel remains with information in U.S. records and archives. TFR also should develop and initiate U.S. service member by-name case investigation procedure which can be briefed to a working level meeting of the U.S. delegation of the Joint Commission prior to the next Commission meeting.

As was agreed during the last Joint Commission working group meeting, TFR should work with the Executive Secretary to prepare an unclassified response which can be released to the public. The target date for release of this response is mid-October.

Although we discussed limiting the Task Force's immediate priorities to a more manageable number--around five--I am providing you this more comprehensive list. It should assist you during your discussions in Moscow during Secretary Stone's upcoming visit and it clearly sets out what needs to be worked on prior to the next commission meeting. We appreciate the fact the Army still needs time to reach full operational capability but unless we move quickly to accomplish these important objectives we may loose the window of opportunity now open to us.

/signed/ Edward W. Ross Director Office of POW/MIA Affairs